Rousseau's Letters to Franquières

Translation and notes by

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Rousseau to Laurent Aymon de Franquières[1]

(March 25, 1769)

There it is, sir, this wretched idle talk that my humiliated amour propre has made you await so long, for lack of feeling that a much nobler amour propre ought to teach me to surmount the other. What does it matter that my verbosity appear wretched to you, provided that I be content with the sentiment which dictated it to me. As soon as my improved condition granted me some strength, I profited thereby to reread and send it to you. If you have the courage to go as far as the end, I beg you afterwards kindly return it to me, without saying anything to me of that which you will have thought of it, and which I understand more than enough. I salute you, sir, and embrace you with all my heart.

Renou[2]

Monquin, March 25, 1769

Rousseau to Laurent Aymon de Franquières

Bourgoin, January 15, 1769

I feel, sir, the uselessness of the duty I fulfill in answering your last letter: but it is a duty after all that you impose on me and I gladly fulfill it though badly, given the distractions of the condition where I am.

My design in telling you here my opinion concerning the principle points of your letter is to tell it to you with simplicity and without seeking to make you adopt it.[3] That would be against my principles and even against my taste. For I am just; and as I do not like for one to seek to subjugate me, I do not seek either to subjugate anyone. I know that common reason is very limited, that as soon as one goes out from its narrow bounds, each has his own which is proper only to himself, that opinions are propagated by opinions not by reason, and that whoever yields to the reasoning of another, something already quite rare, yields by prejudice, authority, affection, or

laziness; rarely, perhaps never, by his own judgment.[4]

You mention to me, sir, that the result of your inquiries concerning the author of things is a state of doubt. I am unable to judge concerning this state, because it has never been my own.[5] I believed in my childhood by authority, in my youth by sentiment, in my mature age by reason; now I believe because I have always believed. While my extinguished memory no longer places me on the path of my reasonings, while my enfeebled judiciousness no longer permits me to begin them anew, the opinions which resulted from them remain with me in all their force; and without my having the will nor the courage for putting them anew in deliberation, I adhere to them confidently and conscientiously, certain of having, in the vigor of my judgment, brought to their discussions all the attention and good faith of which I was capable.[6] If I have been mistaken, it is not my fault but nature's, which did not give my head a greater measure of intelligence and reason. I have no more today; I have much less. On what foundation, therefore, shall I begin again to deliberate? The moment is pressing; the departure is drawing near. I would never have the time nor the strength to finish the great work of a recasting. Allow that in any event I bear away with me the consistency and firmness of a man, and not the discouraging and timid doubts of an old babbler.

With respect to what I can recall of my former ideas, with respect to what I perceive concerning the movement of your own, I see that not having followed in our inquiries the same path, it is hardly surprising that we should not have arrived at the same conclusion. Weighing the proofs for the existence of God with the difficulties, you have found none of the sides sufficiently preponderant for you to decide, and you have remained in doubt. It is not in that way that I proceeded. I examined all the systems concerning the formation of the universe that I had been able to know; I meditated on those I could imagine. I compared them all as best I could: and I made up my mind not for the one which offered me no difficulties, for they all offered me some, but for the one which seemed to me to have the least. I told myself that these difficulties were in the nature of the thing, that the contemplation of the infinite would always surpass the limits of my understanding, that, being obliged never to hope to conceive fully the system of nature, all I could do was to consider it from the sides that I could grasp, that it was necessary to know in peace how not to know all the rest; and I admit that in these inquiries I thought as do the folk of whom you speak who do not reject a clear or sufficiently proven truth for the difficulties which accompany it, and which one could not remove. I then had, I admit, a confidence so bold, or at least a persuasion

so strong, that I would have defied every philosopher to propose any other intelligible system concerning nature, to which I could not have opposed more powerful, more invincible objections than those he could oppose to me about my own; and then it would have been necessary to resolve myself to remain believing nothing as you do, which did not depend on me, or to reason badly, or to believe as I have done.[7]

An idea which came to me thirty years ago has perhaps contributed more than any other to make me unshakeable.[8] Let us suppose, I said to myself, the human race grown old until this day in the most complete materialism, without ever an idea of divinity or of soul having entered into any human mind. Let us suppose that philosophical atheism had exhausted all its systems for explaining the formation and the working of the universe by the interplay alone of matter and necessary movement, an expression of which, moreover, I have never comprehended anything.[9] In this condition, sir, excuse my candor, I further supposed what I have always seen, and what I felt must be, that instead of resting tranquilly in these systems, as in the bosom of the truth, their agitated partisans incessantly sought to speak of their doctrine, to clarify it, to extend it, to explain it, to palliate it, to correct it, and like one who feels the house he inhabits trembling under his feet, to shore it up with new arguments. Let us finally end these suppositions by that of a Plato, of a Clarke, who rising suddenly in their midst, had said to them: My friends, if you had begun the analysis of this universe by that of yourselves, you would have found in the nature of your being the key to the constitution of this same universe that you seek in vain without that.[10] Then explaining to them the distinction between the two substances, he would have proven to them by the very properties of matter that, whatever Locke may say of it, the supposition of matter thinking is a veritable absurdity.[11] He would have made them see what is the nature of a truly active and thinking being, and from the establishment of this being who judges, he would have finally ascended again to the obscure but sure notion of the Supreme Being: who can doubt that, struck by the radiance, the simplicity, the truth, the beauty of this delightful idea, mortals until then blind, enlightened by the first beams of the divinity, would have offered to it by acclamation their first homage, and that thinkers above all and philosophers would have blushed for having contemplated so long the exteriors of this immense machine, without finding, without even suspecting the key to its constitution, and always grossly limited by their senses, for never having known how to see anything but matter where everything showed them that another substance gave life to the universe and intelligence to man.[12] It is then, sir, that the fashion would have

been favorable to this new philosophy, that the youth and the wise would have found themselves in agreement, that a doctrine so beautiful, so sublime, so mild, and so consoling for every just man would have really stirred all men to virtue, and that this fair word "humanity", now reduced to the point of insipidity, to the point of ridicule, by people the least humane in the world, would have been more imprinted in hearts than in books. A simple transposition of time would then have sufficed for reversing the path of philosophical fashion, with this difference, that the fashion of today, despite its glittering words, does not promise us a generation that is very respectable, nor philosophers who are very virtuous.

You object, sir, that if God had wanted to oblige men to know him, he would have placed his existence in evidence before all eyes. It is for those who make faith in God a dogma necessary for salvation to answer this objection, and they answer by revelation.[13] As for me, who believes in God without believing this faith to be necessary, I do not see why God would put himself under the obligation to give it to us. I think that everyone will be judged not concerning what he has believed, but concerning what he has done; and I do not believe that a doctrinal system is necessary for works, because the conscience takes this doctrine's place.[14]

I well believe, it is true, that it is necessary to be of good faith in one's belief, and not to make from it a system favorable to our passions. As we are not all intelligence, we cannot philosophize with so much disinterestedness that our will does not have a little influence over our opinions. One can often judge concerning the secret inclinations of a man by his purely speculative sentiments[15]; and that being posited, I think it could well be that he who has not wanted to believe might be punished for not having believed.

However, I believe that God has sufficiently revealed Himself to men both by his works and in their hearts, and if there are any who do not know him, according to me this is because they do not want to know him or because they have no need of knowing him.

In this latter case is the savage and uncultivated man who has not yet made any use of his reason, who, governed only by his appetites, has no need of any other guide, and who, following only nature's instinct, advances by movements that are always right.[16] This man does not know God, but he does not offend him. In the other case, on the contrary, is the philosopher who, by dint of wanting to exalt his intelligence, of refining, of fine-spinning over what was thought prior to him unsettles at last all the axioms of simple and primitive reason, and for wanting always to know more and better than others

arrives at knowing nothing at all.[17] The man who is simultaneously reasonable and modest, whose practiced but limited understanding feels its limits and keeps within them, finds in these limits the notion of his soul and that of the author of his being, without being able to pass beyond to render these notions clear and to contemplate the one and the other from so nearby, as if he were himself a pure mind. Then taken hold by respect he stops and does not touch the veil, content to know that the vast Being is underneath.[18] There is as far as philosophy is useful for practice; the rest is no more than an idle speculation for which man was not made at all, from which the moderate reasoner abstains, and in which the common man does not enter at all.[19] This man, who is neither a brute nor a prodigy, is man properly speaking, the mean between the two extremes, and who comprises nineteen twentieths of mankind. It is for this numerous class to sing the Psalm Coeli enerrant, and it is the one indeed which sings it.[20] All the peoples of the earth know and adore God, and though each one adorns him according to its fashion, beneath all these diverse raiments one yet always finds God.[21] The small number of elite who have higher expectations of doctrine, and whose genius does not limit itself to common sense, wants thereby a more transcendant one, this is not with respect to what I blame it: But that it should go from there to put itself in the place of mankind and say that God has hidden Himself from men because it, the small number, no longer sees him, I find that in this it is wrong. It can happen, I agree, that the flow of fashion and the play of intrigue might extend the philosophical sect and persuade the multitude for a moment that it no longer believes in God. But this passing moment cannot last, and however one proceeds, it will always be necessary in the long run to have a God for man.[22] Finally, when breaking through the nature of things the divinity would increase in evidence for us, I do not doubt that the new Lyceum would increase by the same ratio the subtlety for denying it. In the long run reason takes the bent that the heart gives to it[23]; and when one wants to think on everything otherwise than does the people, one arrives at the end sooner or later.

All this, sir, hardly seems philosophic to you, nor to me either. But always in good faith with myself, I feel joined to my reasonings, however simple they may be, the weight of the inner assent.[24] You want that one distrust it; I could not think like you on this point, and on the contrary, I find in this internal judgment a natural safeguard against the sophisms of my reason. I even fear that on this occasion you are confusing the secret penchants of our heart which lead us astray, with this more secret dictate

(dictamen), even more internal, which entreats and murmurs against these interested decisions, and leads us back in spite of ourselves onto the road of the truth. This interior sentiment is that of nature itself[25]; it is an appeal on its part against the sophisms of reason, and what proves it is that it never speaks more strongly than when our will yields the most obligingly to judgments that this sentiment persists in rejecting. Far from believing that whoever judges according to it is subject to being mistaken, I believe that it never misleads us and that it is the light of our feeble understanding, when we want to go farther than what we are able to conceive.[26]

And after all, how many times is not philosophy itself, with all its pride, forced to have recourse to this internal judgment that it affects to despise. Was it not this alone which made Diogenes walk as his only reply before Zeno who was denying movement?[27] Was it not by this that all philosophical antiquity responded to the pyrrhonists?[28] Let us not go so far: while all of modern philosophy rejects spirits, suddenly Bishop Berkley arises and maintains there is no body. How has one managed to respond to this fearsome logician?[29] Remove the inner sentiment, and I challenge all modern philosophers together to prove to Berkley that there are bodies.[30] Good young man, who seem to me so well born, in good faith I implore (conjure) you by it, and allow me to cite you here an author who will not be suspect to you, the author of the Pensées Philosophiques.[31] Let a man come to you to say that casting at random a multitude of letters from the printing press, he saw the Aeneid all arranged result from this throw. Allow that instead of going to verify this marvel, you would answer him coldly: Sir, that is not impossible, but you are lying. By virtue of what, I pray you, will you answer him thus?[32]

Well who does not know that without the inner sentiment, there would soon remain no traces of truth on earth, that we would all be successively the playthings of the most monstrous opinions, to the extent that those who would uphold them would have more genius, skill and wit, and that finally reduced to blushing by our very reason, we would soon no longer know what to believe nor to think.[33]

But the objections..... No doubt there are insoluble ones for us and many, I know. But once more, give me a system where there are none, or tell me how I ought to resolve myself.[34] Even more, by the nature of my system, provided that my direct proofs are well established, the difficulties should not detain me, given the impossibility where I am, I a composite being, for reasoning exactly concerning pure spirits and for observing sufficiently their nature. But you materialists, who speak to me of a single, palpable substance, subjected

by its nature to the inspection of the senses, you are obliged, not only to tell me nothing but what is clear, well proven, but to resolve all my difficulties in a wholly satisfying way, because we possess, you and I, all the instruments necessay for this solution.[35] And for example, when you make thought issue from combinations of matter, you must show me by the senses these combinations and their result by the laws of physics and mechanics alone, since you acknowledge no others.[36] You epicurean, you make up the soul from subtle atoms. But what do you call "subtle", I pray you?[37] You know that we do not know any absolute dimensions, and that nothing is small or large but relative to the eye which looks at it. Assume I take an adequate microscope and I look at one of your atoms. I see a large piece of crooked rock. From the play and hooking up of such pieces, I am waiting to see thought result. You Modernist, you show me an organic molecule. I take my microscope, and I see a dragon as big as half my bedroom: I am waiting to see forming and twisting itself out of such dragons until what I see resulting from the whole is a being not only organic but intelligent, that is to say a being that is rigorously one, etc., and not an agregation.[38] You might tell me, sir, that the world was arranged by chance, like the Roman Republic.[39] For the comparison to be just, it would be necessary that the Roman Republic was not composed with men, but with pieces of wood. Show me clearly and by the senses the purely material generation of the first intelligent being; I ask nothing more of you.

But if all is the work of an intelligent, powerful and beneficent being, from where does the evil on earth derive?[40] I admit to you that this so terrible a difficulty has never impressed me much, either because I have not well conceived it, or because in fact it does not have all the solidity it appears to have. Our philosophers have arisen against metaphysical entities, and I know no one who fabricates so many. What do they understand by "the bad"? What is "the bad" in itself? Or where is "the bad" relative to nature and to its Author? The universe subsists; order reigns there and conserves itself there; everything perishes there in succession, because such is the law of material and moved beings. But all is renewed there and nothing degenerates there, because such is the order of its author, and this order does not contradict itself. I do not see anything bad in all that. But when I suffer, is this not bad? When I die, is this not bad? Gently: I am subject to death, because I received life. There was for me only one means for not dying; it was to have never been born. Life is a positive but finite good, whose limit is called death.[41] The limit of the positive is not the negative; it is zero. Death is terrible for us, and we call this terror bad. Pain is also bad for the one who suffers, I admit.

But pain and pleasure were the only means for attaching a sensitive and perishable being to his own conservation, and these means are managed with a goodness worthy of the Supreme Being. At the very moment that I am writing this I have just experienced again how much the sudden cessation of a sharp pain is a keen and delicious pleasure. Would one dare tell me that the cessation of the keenest pleasure is a sharp pain? The sweet enjoyment of life is permanent; to taste it, it is sufficient not to suffer.[42] Pain is only an importunate but necessary warning, that this good which is so dear to us is in peril. When I looked closely at all that, I found, perhaps I proved, that the sentiment of death and that of pain is almost nil in the order of nature.[43] It is men who have sharpened it. Without their senseless refinements, without their barbarous institutions physical ills would hardly reach us, would hardly affect us, and we would not feel death.

But the morally bad! another work of man, to which God has no other part than of having made him free, and in this respect similar to himself. Will it then be necessary to blame God for men's crimes and for the evils that they draw to themselves? On seeing a field of battle, will it be necessary to reproach him for having created so many broken legs and arms?[44]

Why, you will say, was man made free, since he must abuse his liberty? Ah, Monsieur de Franquières, if ever there existed a mortal who had not abused it, this mortal alone honors humanity more than all the scoundrels who cover the earth degrade it. My God! give me some virtues and place me one day near some Fenelons, some Catos, some Socrates.[45] What will the rest of mankind matter to me? I shall not blush for having been a man.

I have told you, sir, here it is a question of my sentiment, not my proofs, and you see it only too well. I remember having formerly encountered on my way this question of the origin of evil, and of having touched it lightly.[46] But you have not read these incessant repetitions; and as for me, I have forgotten them: we have both of us done very well. All I know is that the facility that I had for resolving them came from the opinion that I have always had of the eternal coexistence of two principles:[47] the one active, which is God; the other passive, which is matter; that the active being combines and modifies with a complete power, but yet without having created it and without being able to destroy it. This opinion caused me to be jeered by the philosophers to whom I told it. They judged it absurd and contradictory. That may be, but it did not seem so to me, and I found in it the advantage of explaining clearly and without difficulty to my liking so many questions in which they are entangled;

among others that which you proposed to me here as insoluble.

As for the rest, I dare believe that my sentiment, not very poised on every other matter, ought to be such a little on this one. And when you know better my fate, some day you will perhaps say in thinking of me: who else has the right to increase the measure he has found for the ills that man suffers here below?

You attribute to the difficulty of this same question, which fanaticism and superstition have abused, the evils that religions have caused on earth. That may be, and I admit to you even that all the formulas in matters of faith appear to me as only so many chains of iniquity, falsehood, hypocrisy and tyranny.[48] But let us never be unjust, and let us not remove the good in order to augment the evil. To root out all belief in God from the heart of man is to destroy all virtue there.[49] This is my opinion, sir. Perhaps it is false; but as long as it is mine I shall not be so cowardly as to dissemble it to you.

To do good is the sweetest occupation of a well born man. His probity, his beneficence, are not the work of his principles, but that of his good naturedness. He yields to his propensities in practicing justice, as the wicked yields to his in practicing iniquity. To gratify the taste which brings us to do good is goodness, but not virtue.[50]

This word virtue signifies strength.[51] There is no virtue without struggle; there is none without victory. Virtue does not consist only in being just, but in being so by triumphing over one's passions, by ruling over one's own heart. Titus rendering the people of Rome happy, distributing favors and benefits everywhere, could not waste a single day and not be virtuous. He was certainly so in rejecting Berenice.[52] Brutus having his children die could be only just. But Brutus was a tender father; in order to do his duty he tore out his insides, and Brutus was virtuous.[53]

You see here in advance the question restored to its place. This divine simulacrum of which you speak to me offers itself to me under an image which is not ignoble, and I believe I feel, by the impression this image makes on my heart, the warmth it is capable of producing. But this simulacrum in the end is still only one of these metaphysical entities which you do not want men to make into gods. It is a pure object of contemplation. How far do you take the effect of this sublime contemplation? If you only want to draw from it a new encouragement for doing good, I agree with you. But that is not what is at issue. Let us suppose your decent heart preyed upon by the most terrible passions, from which you are not immune, since in the end you are a man. This image, which in

tranquility is depicted as so delightful, will it lose nothing of its charms and will it not wane in the midst of the torrent? Let us set aside the discouraging and terrible supposition of the perils which can tempt virtue put in despair. Let us suppose only that a too sensitive heart is consumed with an involuntary love for the daughter or the wife of his friend, that he be the master of enjoying her between heaven, which sees nothing of it, and himself who wishes to say nothing of it to anyone; that her charming shape, adorned by all the attractions of beauty and voluptuousness, entices him. At the moment when his intoxicated senses are ready to yield themselves to their delights, will this abstract image of virtue come to contend for his heart with the real object which strikes it?[54] Will it appear to him in this moment the most beautiful? Will it wrest him from the arms of the one he loves to be delivered to the vain contemplation of a phantom he knows to be unreal? Will he end like Joseph, and will he leave his cloak?[55] No, sir, he will close his eyes and succumb. The believer, you will say, will succumb as well. Yes, the weak man; he, for example, who is writing to you. But give them both the same degree of strength, and see the difference in the base of support.

(What are) the means, sir, of resisting violent temptations when one can yield to them without fear while saying to oneself, what is the good of resisting? In order to be virtuous, the philosopher needs to be it in the eyes of men. But under the eyes of God the just man is quite strong.[56] He counts this life and its goods and evils and all its vainglory for such a little thing! He sees so much beyond! Invincible strength of virtue, no one knows you save he who feels all his being, and who knows it is not in the power of men to dispose of it.[57] Do you sometimes read Plato's Republic? See in the second dialogue with what energy Socrates' friend, whose name I have forgotten, depicts to him the just man beaten down by the outrages of fortune and by the injustices of men, calumnied, persecuted, tormented, a prey to all the disgrace for crime and deserving all the rewards for virtue, already seeing death approaching, and certain that the hatred of the malicious will not spare his memory, when they can do no more to his person.[58] What a discouraging scene, if anything could discourage virtue. Socrates himself, appalled, cries out and believes himself obliged to invoke the gods before answering. But without the hope of another life, he would have answered badly for this one.[59] Yet, should everything end for us with death, which cannot be if God is just, and consequently should he exist, the idea alone of this existence would still be for man an encouragement to virtue and a consolation in his miseries, which are lacking to the one who, believing himself isolated in this universe, feels at the bottom of his heart no confidant for his thoughts.[60] It is always

a sweetness in adversity to have a witness that one has not deserved it; it is a pride truly worthy of virtue to be able to say to God: Thou readest in my heart, thou seest that I use in a strong soul and as a just man the liberty that thou hast given me. The true believer, who feels himself everywhere under the eternal eye, likes to honor himself in the face of heaven for having fulfilled his duties on earth.[61]

You see that I have not contended with you over this simulacrum that you have presented to me as the unique object of the virtues of the wise. But, my dear sir, return now to yourself, and see how much this object is uncombinable, is incompatible, with your principles. How do you not feel that this same law of necessity which alone rules, according to you, the proceeding of the world and all events, also rules all the actions of men, all the thoughts in their heads, all the sentiments in their hearts, that nothing is free, that everything is forced, necessary, inevitable, that all the movements of man, directed by blind matter, depend on his will only because his will itself depends on necessity; that consequently there are neither virtues, nor vices, neither merit, nor demerit, nor morality in human actions and that these words, decent man or scoundrel, ought to be for you entirely devoid of sense. However, they are not; I am quite sure of it. Your decent heart, in spite of your arguments, protests against your dismal philosophy. The sentiment of liberty, the charm of virtue, make themselves felt by you in spite of yourself, and there is how on all sides this strong and salutary voice of the inner sentiment recalls to the bosom of the truth and of virtue every man whose ill conducted reason leads astray.[62] Bless, sir, this holy and beneficent voice which leads you back to the duties of man that the philosophy in fashion would end by making you forget. Do not give yourself over to your arguments but when you feel them in agreement with the dictate (dictamen) of your conscience, and every time that you feel a contradiction there, be sure that it is your arguments who deceive you.[63]

Although I do not wish to cavil with you, nor follow step by step your two letters, I cannot, however, deny myself saying a word concerning the parallel of the wise Hebrew and the wise Greek.[64] As an admirer of the one and the other, I can hardly be suspected of prejudices in speaking of them. I do not believe you to be in the same circumstance. I am scarcely surprised that you give all the advantage to the second.[65] You have not adequately made acquaintance with the other, and you have not taken adequate care to disentangle what is truly his own, from what is foreign to him and which disfigures him in your eyes, as

in those of many other people who, according to me, have not looked more closely there than you have.[66] If Jesus had been born in Athens, and Socrates in Jerusalem, if Plato (and) Xenophon had written the life of the first, Luke and Matthew that of the other, you would change your language a good deal, and what does him harm in your mind is precisely what renders his elevation of soul more astonishing and more admirable, namely his birth in Judea among the most abject people which perhaps then existed, whereas Socrates, born among the most instructed and most likeable, found all the helps that he needed for elevating himself easily to the tone that he took.[67] He rose up against the sophists as did Jesus against the priests, with this difference, that Socrates often imitated his adversaries, and that if his so noble and gentle death had not honored his life, he would have passed for a sophist like them. As for Jesus, the sublime flight taken by his great soul always raised him above all mortals, and from the age of twelve until the moment he expired in the cruelest as well as in the most degrading of all deaths, he did not contradict himself for a moment. His noble project was to resuscitate his people, to make it once again a free people and worthy of being it; for it was from there that it was necessary to begin. The profound study he made of the Law of Moses, his efforts for reawakening in hearts the enthusiasm and the love for it revealed his purpose as much as was possible for not disquieting the Romans. But his abject and cowardly compatriots, instead of listening to him conceived a hatred for him precisely because of his genius and his virtue, which placed before their eyes their unworthiness. In the end, it was only after having seen the impossibility of executing his project that he extended it in his head, and that, unable by himself to make a revolution among his people, he wanted to make one, through his disciples, in the universe.[68] What prevented him from succeeding in his first plan, in addition to the baseness of his people incapable of every virtue, was the too great gentility of his own character, a gentility which is more akin to an angel and a God than to man, which did not abandon him for an instant, even on the cross, and which causes streams of tears to be shed by whoever knows how to read his life as it must be read, through the rubbish by which these poor folk have disfigured it. Fortunately they respected and transcribed faithfully his speaches which they did not understand. Remove some badly rendered or oriental turns of phrase, (and) one does not see a word there which would not be worthy of him; and it is there that one recognizes the divine man, who, out of such pitiful disciples, nonetheless made, in their gross but proud enthusiasm, some eloquent and courageous men.

You object to me that he made miracles. This objection would be formidable if it were just. But you know, sir, or at least you might know that, according to me, far from Jesus having made miracles, he declared most positively that he would not make any, and indicated a very great scorn for those who asked for any.[69]

How many things remain for me to say! But this letter is enormous. It is necessary to finish. Here is the last time that I shall return to these matters. I wanted to oblige you, sir, I do not repent for it; on the contrary. I thank you for having made me take up again a thread of ideas almost erased, but whose remains can have their use for me in the condition where I am.

Adieu, sir; remember sometimes a man whom you would have loved, I flatter myself, had you known him better, and who occupied himself with you in some moments in which one is hardly occupied except with oneself.[70]

Renou

1. First published in the Oeuvres Posthumes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel, chez Samuel Fauché, 1782), this letter was apparently intended by Rousseau to appear in the edition of his collected writings. Although the original letter is lost, the Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel possesses a manuscript copy (Lettres de J.-J. Rousseau, A-H, MsR 283, f. 149-154) written partly in Rousseau's hand and partly in the hand of a secretary, with corrections inserted by Rousseau. Early editions did not identify the addressee of the letter, and until the edition by Pierre-Maurice Masson in 1914 (La Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard, Appendice V, p. 513-526), all earlier publications relied on the faulty 1782 edition. Ralph Leigh, in his critical edition of the Correspondance Complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (The Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, 1980), Tome XXXVII, p. 13-27, identifies the addressee for the first time as Laurent Aymon de Franquières (1744-1790), a young nobleman from the Dauphiné who, following the family tradition, was received as member of the counsel to the Parlement of Grenoble in 1766, but apparently without ever actually assuming the duties of this office. Travelling often, he is reported as visiting Voltaire at Ferney, near Geneva, in 1771. I wish to express gratitude to the late Melle Claire Rosselet, of the Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel, for allowing me to examine, during the summers of 1974, 1975 and 1976, the manuscript of this letter and of others in her charge, and to the Earhart Foundation for providing financial assistance towards the preparation of this edition. For the critical apparatus, I have benefited from consulting the editions of the Oeuvres Complètes (Bibliothèque de la Pléïade, Tome IV), of the Lettres Philosophiques (Présentées par Henri Gouhier, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1974), of the Correspondance Complète (édition critique établie et annotée par Ralph Leigh, op. cit.), and of The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings, edited and translated by Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2. Upon returning to France from England in 1767, Rousseau was still under a mandate of arrest for the publication of the Emile and the Social Contract. Advised by his friend the Prince de Conti to live under an assumed name, Rousseau took the name of Renou (Letter to the Marquis de Mirabeau, June 24, 1767). In 1770 Rousseau was again allowed to live openly in Paris, on the condition that he no longer publish on religion or politics. Subsequently, despite this ban, he discreetly prepared his Considerations on the Government of Poland (1771-1772), just as he apparently took measures to assure that the Letter to Franquières would appear in the projected edition of his collected writings. In addition, Rousseau judiciously threaded observations bearing on religion and politics throughout the autobiographical writings of his last years: The Confessions, the Dialogues Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques, and the Reveries of the Solitary Walker.

3. Cf. the beginning of "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar", in Emile, Oeuvres Complètes (Bibliothèque de la Pléïade. Paris: Gallimard, 1969) Tome IV, p. 565-566. All subsequent citations of the Oeuvres Complètes, unless otherwise noted, will be to the Pléïade edition, cited as O.C.

4. Cf. Rêveries VIII, O.C. I, p. 1077 et sq. and the different reasoning Rousseau expresses there in comparison with that in this letter to Franquières or in "The Profession of Faith". Respected by Franquières, Rousseau presents himself as a believer to a young man who is a sceptic. On the difference between "l'homme de génie" and "l'homme vulgaire", see Emile, O.C. IV, p. 266, 320, 324, 341-343, 509, 537, 746, 763.

5. Cf., however, the Savoyard Vicar, in Emile, op. cit., p. 567-570; also Rêveries III in comparison to Rêveries IV and V.

6. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 630 et sq. Although the Vicar says the same as does Rousseau here, that his "less active mind" at his age prevents a return to these questions, the portrait of the Vicar's faith in the Emile is provided at the height of Rousseau's powers. For parallel discussions, see Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 728 et sq., 840; Rêveries III, O.C. I, p. 1017, 1021 in comparison with Rêveries IV and V and Rousseau's Letter to Moultou, February 14, 1769.

7. See Emile, op. cit., p. 606 in comparison to p. 305, 340-341 fn., 466-467, 602. Cf. Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 879; Rêveries III, O.C., p. 1017-1018 in comparison to Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire, August 18, 1756, in the present edition of The Collected Writings of Rousseau, Vol. 3, p. 117 and in comparison to Emile, p. 340-341 fn.; Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, in The Collected Writings of Rousseau, Vol. 3, p. 79-80, and Rêveries IV and V. Speaking to Voltaire and to Franquières as the Vicar speaks to the young Jean-Jacques, Rousseau is mindful of addressing persons whose destiny is to be in society.

8. Rousseau thus disregards the "vision of Vincennes" (1749), which he describes elsewhere as the decisive moment shaping his life and thought. See Rousseau's Lettre à Malesherbes, January 12, 1762, in O.C. I, p. 1135-1136; Confessions VIII, O.C. I, p. 351.

9. See Diderot, Pensées Philosophiques XVIII and XXI.

10. On Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), see Emile, op. cit., p. 570 and Roger Masters, "Rousseau and the Illustrious Clarke", in Michel Launay, Jean-Jacques Rousseau et Son Temps. Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1969, p. 37-50. Author of the Discourses Concerning the Being and the Attributes of God (1706), Clarke was a friend and follower of Newton but a critic of Locke and of materialism. See also The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence. H.G. Alexander ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978.

11. See Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding IV.3, sec. 6; Voltaire, Lettres Anglaises XIII. Cf. Emile, Ms. Favre, O.C. IV, p. 217-220; Emile, op. cit., p. 519, where Rousseau attenuates the distinction between the two substances in a way reminiscent of Descartes' teaching on the "composite" in Les Passions de l'Ame. See Emile, p. 481, 553, 556 in relation to p. 431 and p. 546.

12. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 570-573 et sq. in relation to p. 519, also to p. 305, 348-352, 546, 553, 602.

13. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 606-636 on revelation; also Fiction ou Morceau Allégorique sur la Révélation, O.C. IV, p. 1044-1054.

14. Emile, op. cit., p. 600-602, 607, 629-632, 721, 728-729, 751 in relation to p. 340-341 fn., 599 and Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 79-80; Rêveries, O.C. I, p. 1046-1047, 1077-1078; Lettre à Malesherbes, op. cit., p. 1137, also p. 1140-1141. Rousseau's teaching on "natural religion", pointing to the primacy of moral practice, transforms radically and obscures the classical tension between Jerusalem and Athens in the Western tradition.

15. Cf. Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse, aph. 6.

16. Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 79-80; Rêveries, O.C. I, p. 1046-1047, 1077-1078; Emile, op. cit., p. 340-341 fn.

17. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 435 in relation to p. 428-429 and yet p. 483, 632, 636. See also Discourse on the Sciences and Arts in Collected Writings of Rousseau, Vol. 2, p. 6-7, 13, 20-22. Compare here the radical difference not only between Rousseau and the Encyclopédistes, but also between Rousseau and Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle on the status of philosophy for human well being. See Plato, Symposium 201d-212c; Apology of Socrates 30a-b, 33b-d, 36b-e; Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1166a 20-25, 1177b 27-1178a 8, 1179a 23-33.

18. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 428, 430; Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, op. cit., p. 11-12. Cf. Descartes, Méditations III and IV, in Oeuvres et Lettres. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, p. 295, 305; Buffon, Histoire Nat. Anim., "Vue de la Nature",I.

19. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 266; Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, op. cit., p. 21-22; Rêveries IV, in comparison with Descartes, Discours de la Méthode I and III, Oeuvres et Lettres, op. cit., p. 127-128, 141-145.

20. Psalm XVIII.2 in the Vulgate edition, or XIX.1 in recent editions. Beginning with "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament announces the work of His hands", the psalm celebrates the creator of the heavens, the sun and the divine law.

21. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 598; Rêveries III, O.C. I, p. 1021 in comparison with Fiction ou Morceau Allégorique sur la Révélation, p. 1049; Letter to Philopolis, in Collected Writings of Rousseau, Vol. 3, p. 128-129; Rêveries IV and V.

22. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 561, 632-635 in comparison with p. 305-306, 348-352, 602.

23. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 481, 500-501, 632, 636.

24. On the inner assent, a leitmotif in Rousseau's writings, see Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 687, 936; Rêveries, O.C. I, p. 1018, 1022 in comparison with Confessions IX, O.C. I, p. 468. Concerning self analysis, and not history, as the basis for discovering the natural sentiments, see Confessions, O.C. I, p. 3, 5; Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 728, 936 and Rêveries V in comparison with Rêveries III and the Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar in Emile IV.

25. On Rousseau's dictamen, see Rêveries IV, O.C. I, p. 1028 in comparison with Spinoza's use of this term to designate an imperative of reason, in the Theological-Political Treatise, ch. XVI and in the Ethics IV, Proposition XVIII, scholia and Proposition LXVII, demonstration. Compare also Rousseau's dictamen, which like his idea of conscience is ultimately an expression of the sentiment of existence, with Socrates' daimonion, which is a negative expression of Socrates' philosophical eros. Cf. Plato, Apology of Socrates 24c, 28a, 31d, 40a-b; Theages 128d-131a; Symposium 201d-204c in comparison with fn. 24 supra and Rêveries V, O.C. I, p. 1047.

26. Consider this argument in relation to Kant's transcendental aesthetic in the Critique of Pure Reason and to his teleology in the Critique of Judgment, sec. 84. Cf. Aristotle on the relation of practical reason and philosophy in Nicomachean Ethics VI and X.

27. Cf. Aristotle, Physics 239b 5, 263a 5 on Zeno the Eleatic. Whereas Aristotle's dianoetic refutation of Zeno presupposes noetic perception, Rousseau's critique of relativity in the modern theory of perception reveals his agreement with the modern rejection of classical noesis. Instead, Rousseau seeks to overcome the problems of relativity by his analysis of the principle not of noesis but of sentiment as the ground of reasoning.

28. On pyrrhonism, see Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, op. cit., p. 6. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 632 on dogmatic scepticism in relation to ibid., p. 567-570, where the Savoyard Vicar begins his own reasonings on man, nature and God on the basis of Cartesian doubt.

29. Cf. Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, op. cit., p. 20

30. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 571 for the Vicar's critique of both idealism and materialism. The problem of refuting Berkeley is raised by Diderot in his Lettre sur les Aveugles, which induced Condillac to attempt to resolve it from the standpoint of materialism in his Traité des Sensations. As a work of genetic epistemology, Rousseau's Emile is in large part a response to the materialism of his friend Condillac, of Helvétius and of early modern philosophy in general.

31. See Diderot, Pensées Philosophiques, sec. XXI. Diderot concludes, however, by saying, "I would well beware of making this argument to an atheist.... (T)he difficulty of the event is compensated more than enough by the multitude of throws." Rousseau's Vicar answers this point in the Emile, op. cit., p. 579. Cf. Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire of August 18, 1756, op. cit., p. 118, where Rousseau provides a more nuanced statement.

32. Cf. footnote 26 supra.

33. Whereas here, as in "The Profession of Faith", Rousseau obscures the distinction between noetic perception and the "inner sentiment", elsewhere he sharpens the distinction even while emphasizing as well the difference between sentiment and sensation. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 344, 370, 388-389, 481; Lettres Morales, O.C. IV, p. 1090; Notes sur "De l'Esprit", O.C. IV, p. 1121-1122 et sq.

34. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 606 in comparison with the apparent contradiction between p. 305 and p. 602.

35. Cf. Emile. op. cit., p. 570-573 et sq.

36. Ibid., p. 571.

37. See Lucretius, De Rerum Natura III.161-257. The discussion there of heat to explain the soul bears comparison not only with Descartes, Discours de la Méthode V, in Oeuvres et Lettres, op. cit., p. 154-158, 162-163 et sq., but also Emile, op. cit., p. 342, 519. Cf. Manuscrit Favre, O.C. IV, p. 219-220.

38. The Modernist to whom Rousseau refers concerning organic molecules is Buffon. See Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, Histoire Naturelle Générale et Particulière, chs. 2-4. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 249-250, 570-573, 579-580, 584.

39. For Rousseau's ambivalence on the question of creation, see Emile, op. cit., p. 580-581, 593 in relation to p. 483-484 and p. 632, 636. Cf. Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont, O.C. IV, p. 956-957.

40. Cf. Descartes, Méditations IV, in Oeuvres et Lettres, op. cit., p. 305-306 et sq.

41. Cf. Letter to Voltaire, August 18, 1756, op. cit., p. 114-115; Emile, op. cit., p. 270.

42. Cf. Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 27-28; Emile, op. cit., p. 253, 269-270; Lettres à Malesherbes, op. cit., p. 1141; Rêveries V, op. cit., p. 1046-1047.

43. Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 27-28; Letter to Voltaire, op. cit., p. 109-110; Emile, op. cit., p. 270, 301-304.

44. Cf. Voltaire, Candide III, in Romans et Contes. Gallimard: Bibliothèque de la Pléïade, p. 149.

45. François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon (1651-1715), Archbishop of Cambrai and preceptor of the Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Louis XIV and heir to the throne, had written Les Aventures de Télémaque for his royal pupil with a view to fundamental reforms of the monarchy. A critic of epicureanism and a disciple of Bossuet until their dispute over Quietism, Fénelon endured political disgrace as a result of his religious and political views. For Rousseau's appreciation of Fénelon, see Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 863-864; Rêveries III, O.C. I, p. 1013; La Nouvelle Hélöise II.xviii, O.C. II, p. 259, where he is described, with Catinat, as one of "the two greatest, most virtuous of the moderns". On Socrates and Cato, see Discourse on Political Economy, in Collected Writings, Vol. 3, p. 151; Discours sur la Vertu du Héros, O.C. II, p. 1268, 1272; also Claude Pichois and René Pintard, eds., Jean-Jacques entre Socrate et Caton. Textes Inédits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1972.

46. Rousseau's specific examination of this question begins with the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality and continues through his epistolary exchanges with Voltaire, notably in Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire of August 18,1756, and culminates with Rousseau's answer to Voltaire's Candide with the publication of the Emile in 1762. Concerning Rousseau's intention to sustain wavering believers in the face of Voltaire's influences, see Rousseau's Letter to Jean-François De Luc, October 10, 1762, in Henri Gouhier's edition of Rousseau's Lettres Philosophiques, op. cit., p. 101-103.

47. On the two principles, see Rousseau's remarks on Manicheanism in the Lettre à C. de Beaumont, op. cit., p. 955-957 and compare these texts with Leibniz's animadversions on Pierre Bayle on the same point, or on Zoroaster, in the Essais de Théodicée II, sec. 135, in the "Essays on the Justice of God and the Freedom of Man in the Origin of Evil". Cf. Rousseau's criticism of Bayle at the end of "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar", in Emile, op. cit., p. 632-635.

48. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 606-635; Fiction ou Morceau Allégorique sur la Révéla- op. cit., p. 1044-1054; Social Contract IV.8.

49. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 561, 632-635; Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 79-80.

50. See Emile, op. cit., p. 817-818 in comparison with "The Profession of Faith", where the Vicar obscures the distinction between virtue and goodness. Cf. Dialogues, O.C. I, p. 850-851, 863-865 and the differences with Aristotle's argument in Nicomachean Ethics I, VII and X on virtue and taking pleasure in the noble.

51. Rousseau uses the word "force", translated here as "strength". The French term, however, draws attention to questions of natural philosophy, just as the idea of "virtue" in Rousseau points to questions of alienation from nature. Cf. Discours sur la Vertu du Héros, O.C. II, p. 1262-1274; Emile, op. cit., p. 817-818; Dernière Réponse, O.C. III, p. 72.

52. Cf. Lettre à D'Alembert sur les Spectacles, O.C. V, p. 48-51; Dernière Réponse, O.C. III, p. 89. Racine's tragedy Bérénice, discussed by Rousseau in the Lettre à D'Alembert, portrays the conflict between the Roman Emperer Titus' love for the daughter of Herod and his duty as Emperer, which compels him to abandon his love for a foreigner.

53. See Dernière Réponse, O.C. III, p. 72, 88-89; Fragments Politiques, O.C. III, p. 506. Lucius Junius Brutus, founder of the Roman Republic after the death of Lucretia and the expulsion of the Tarquins in 509 B.C., presided over the trial and execution of his own sons, who had conspired to restore the royal authority. Cf. Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy III.3.

54. For the infinitive here translated as "to contend", Rousseau uses the term "disputer", which has both an eristic and a poetic suggestion. In French medieval literature the dispute or débat is a metrical composition in dialogue form involving personifications and often dealing with religious themes. Cf. Marivaux's La Dispute (1742) and its relation to Rousseau's play Narcisse, to which Rousseau alludes in Confessions VII, O.C. I, p. 287.

55. Genesis XXXIX. 12-20. Slave of Potiphar, who was eunuch to the Pharaoh and provost of the palace, Joseph fled Potiphar's wife when she sought to seduce him and upon fleeing left his cloak. Incensed at his rejection, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of attempted rape and offered his cloak as proof, for which Joseph was punished by imprisonment.

56. See Emile, op. cit., p. 603, 636 in comparison with p. 341 fn., 467-468, 522-524 and with Du Contrat Social (Première Version), O.C. III, p. 284-289.

57. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 249-250; Rêveries VIII, O.C. I, p. 1077-1078.

58. Plato, Republic II, 359b - 362c. Glaucon presents this scene to Socrates.

59. See ibid, 368b in relation to 330d - 331d and 608c - 621d. Socrates' appeal to this hope conflicts with the task Glaucon imposes on Socrates in Book II, just as Rousseau's appeal to this hope conflicts with his portrait of the happiness in this life of the natural man. But whereas Socrates' alternate appeal points to the telos of philosophy, Rousseau's alternate appeal betokens the sentiment of existence. Cf. Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, op. cit., p. 79-80; Emile, op. cit., p. 249-250, 340-341 fn.; Rêveries V, O.C. I, 1046-1047. See also De l'Imitation Théâtrale, O.C. V, p. 1210-1211, where Rousseau considers the exchange between Socrates and Glaucon in Republic X in the context of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry.

60. Cf. Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire, August 18, 1756, op. cit., p. 120 and fn. 44 at p. 197; Emile, op. cit., p. 603, 636

61. Ibid. For a very different view, see Rêveries VIII, op. cit., p. 1077-1078. Cf. Plato, Laws 671d on the "divine fear" that is shame before the gods, in contrast to Aristotle's cryptic discussion, in Nicomachean Ethics III. 1115b 12 and 1117b 10-15, of the love of the noble which sustains the courageous man in the face of death in battle.

62. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 600-601 on this same point, in comparison with p. 645, 648, and 654. See the similarities and differences in Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics III. 1109b 30 et sq.

63. Concerning Rousseau's dictamen and his idea of conscience, see note 25 supra. This warrants comparison not only with the idea of synderesis in St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae I, qu. 79, a. 12-13; I-II, qu. 19, a. 5-6; De Veritate qu. 16; In II Sent. Dist. 24, qu. 2, a. 3, but also with Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics III. 1114a 30 - 1114b 12. For an excellent discussion of the idea of conscience in the Christian tradition, contrasted with classical Greek philosophy, see Ernest Fortin, Collected Essays, Vol. 2: Classical Christianity and the Political Order. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996, ch. 3.

64. Just as elsewhere Rousseau draws parallels between Socrates and Cato, his religious writings emphasize the parallel between Socrates and Jesus. Proceeding in this way, however, he transforms the classical tension in the Western tradition, between Jerusalem and Athens, in favor of an idea of natural religion that is consistent with the requirement of alienating the citizen from his nature. Cf. Emile, op. cit., p. 249-251, 467-468, 483-484, 561, 625-627. For references on Rousseau's parallels between Socrates and Cato, see note 45 supra.

65. In the manuscript Rousseau wrote "the first", but he clearly means "the second".

66. Cf. Confessions VIII, O.C. I, p. 392, where Rousseau refers to his several years of careful study of holy scriptures. This study, as well as that of writings of the Fathers of the Church, is reflected in Rousseau's Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont, Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne, Le Lévite d'Ephraïm, no less than in Emile IV, the Social Contract IV.8, the Fiction ou Morceau Allégorique sur la Révélation and in his correspondence.

67. These remarks warrant comparison with Rousseau's defense of the Jews against their persecutors in Emile IV, op. cit., p. 619-620. See also Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne V, O.C. III, p. 799, in the context of Rousseau's parody of Voltaire's "tolerance", which "must not always be required of others (while) never using any with them". Cf. "Des Juifs", in O.C. III, p. 498-499.

68. Cf. Social Contract IV.8, where Rousseau examines the theological-political problem arising from this universalism.

69. See Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne III, O.C. III, p. 730-750. On "the true miracle" of the Founder's great soul, see ibid., p. 727-728, the Social Contract, First Version, II.2, O.C. III, p. 317, and the Social Contract II.7, O.C. III, p. 384.

70. At the time of writing this letter Rousseau had been suffering for months from a serious stomach swelling as well as from a painful blockage of the urethra; he was being pursued in a lawsuit for non-payment of a large debt he denied ever contracting; and he was forced to live clandestinely, under an assumed name, while under a mandate for arrest by the Parliament of Paris. See Rousseau's correspondence with Du Peyrou, beginning with his letter of September 9, 1768, through to his letter to Moultou of February 14, 1769. Cf. on his isolation, Rêveries VIII, O.C. I, p. 1075-1078 in relation to Rêveries V, 1046-1048.